CHAPTER 280

May 20, 2014

“Ugh… If I knew going to college meant I’d be drowning in homework, I would have just worked a desk job at some company in Detroit.”

Justin groaned as he made his way back to the dormitory, books in toe, a tired expression on his face as he tried to find his way back home and to his desk, where he would no doubt drown away his sorrows with the magic of words; words too big for him to really get a good grasp on. Words that he would probably never really understood what they meant. And that meant he’d probably be an awful forensic scientist. Now, if he wanted to be a detective or a private investigator, that might be more up the deductive reasoning portion of Justin’s brain’s alley, but as a forensic scientist, he just never had the ambition or willpower to memorize needlessly long words that were no doubt super big just so some people could seem smarter than others at the water cooler. He hated those kinds of people truth be told, and maybe that was why he wasn’t learning any of this fancy lingo for ideas that would be so much simpler if they just referred to bones as bones and blood as blood. Maya certainly didn’t care much for that stuff either from what he could tell, but she was more on the medicinal side of things with her attempt to get into veterinary studies. It was going about as well as one would expect from someone who failed Spanish in high-school. That is to say she read each word over exactly once, and that’s because with each new letter she had to pause and wonder ‘how the fuck is this even pronounced?’ I suppose it was her gift with animals that hadn’t caused her to flunk out yet; after all, it had to take some serious skill to get an animal to willingly lay down to get themselves fixed. Not that Maya necessarily approved of it, but work was work and grades were grades. She’s just have to hope those animals would forgive her.

He sighed as he slowly opened the door using his shoulder, the crack only opening little by little as he tried to push himself inside with the weight of all his books carrying him down. It was perhaps for this reason that his attempts to tip-toe inside went completely unheard. What weren’t unheard were the sounds of two voices in the living room: Chie’s and Yukikos. Justin didn’t think much of it at first, but as he started to listen, it slowly became clear to him that Chie had been bawling her eyes out over something, and Yukiko… well Yukiko sounded very concerned. What had been an attempt to go up to his room and study had quickly become him spying on a conversation between his girlfriend and her best friend, trying to make heads or tails of anything going on. He was careful as he stepped in, a curious ear to the wind as he slowly closed the door behind him, trying to make nary a sound. After all, he didn’t want to interrupt, nor did he want to give away his presence. Chie had been avoiding him like the plague recently, and if there was even a chance this

could have to do with him, he wanted to know what was going on and he wanted to know this very instant. Perhaps it wasn't the most eloquent or respectable way to derive information from someone, but it wasn't like she was giving him much choice here.

"I don't know what to do Yukiko…" Chie sniffed, voice cracking ever so slightly under the pressure of her troubles. Oh did it pain Justin to hear that, and had he not been undercover, he might have just ran over and tried to give her a hug. But he remained undetected for now, and he intended to keep it that way against his better judgement. After all, how would Chie react if she turned around and saw him there, staring, watching, listening to whatever dirty truths she confided to Yukiko in what she had thought to be a private outlet of her woes. "I'm scared." Yukiko bet her bottom lip for a moment, a bewildered expression on her face. Truly she had never dealt with a situation like this before, nor had she expected to be some source of guidance for Chie of all people on the matter. Usually it was Chie who showed her the way, not the other way around. There was just this awkward sensation filling the air as Chie begged and pleaded with her for advice, and she hadn't the slightest idea what she could say. And the sad part was, Yukiko was probably the only person who she could ask; god knows she couldn't turn to Justin, that was part of the problem in the first place. She'd have to eventually, but she just wasn't ready for that yet.

"Are you… Sure that's accurate?" Yukiko questioned. Really, she was putting all her hopes into the fact that Chie had made some mistake somewhere along the line and all this doom and gloom was a direct result of her reading into something that wasn't even true. Granted, it would still be pretty awkward, but they'd still have a solution to their problem and they could laugh about it to some extent. And everyone could go on with their lives. Hell, Chie might have learned a thing or two. Alas, she wouldn't have been freaking out if she wasn't one hundred percent sure this was happening; she'd still be in denial.

"I'm positive."

"Have you… said anything to him?"

"Said anything to him!? This is his fault!" Chie suddenly snapped, tears still in her eyes, but her teeth clamped tightly together in anger. Justin couldn't help but cringe. He didn't know what he did, but he could tell from Chie's extravagant reaction it wasn't good in any way shape or form. It was hard enough watching here like this without being the one to blame for… whatever it was he was to blame for. He sighed, his heart strings playing a sorrowful melody deep within his chest cavity. Unfortunately, while he had opened the door silently enough, Justin wasn't exactly a quiet sigher, if there ever was such a thing. Chie jumped ever so slightly, freezing in fear before turning around to see Justin, a confused and quite frankily hurt expression on his face. He didn't know what had happened, but he didn't want to be

responsible. She quickly wiped the tears from her eyes, trying to hide any sign of her sorrow as she stared Justin down across the room, brow tightening up into a glare. “…How long have you been standing there?”

“…I… I just got here.” He responded solemnly, his frown only seeming to grow larger with the death glare he was now receiving. Oh, it wasn’t bad enough she was pissed off at him for something he allegedly did, but he wasn’t even allowed to know what he did in the first place? It wasn’t fair. He wasn’t the one being the bad guy here… At least… he didn’t think so. “Chie… What’s going on?” She growled under her breath before quickly jumping up from the couch and rushing her way to the door, pushing Justin aside as run out the dormitory, not so much as answering the question before fleeing in tears. Justin tried to stop her, but alas, she was long gone before he could even react, his arm extended towards a door that had long since shut. He felt his heart constrict for a moment, pain shooting through his body before slowly turning towards Yukiko, who thankfully enough was being much more level-headed about this. Her eyes were downcast, and she wasn’t smiling, which was quite unusual for Yukiko. She didn’t say a word to Justin until he broke the ice. “Yukiko… what’s happening?”

“I… Don’t think I should say.” She sighed. It wasn’t that Justin didn’t deserve to know of course, but it wasn’t really her place to tell him; it was a little too private for her to thrust herself into the middle of things. Besides, Chie seemed pretty vocally against telling him anything, maybe it wouldn’t be such a good idea in the first place.

“Please Yukiko; she’s been mad at me for weeks and I don’t know why…” He pleaded, making his way over to the couch, though refusing to sit. He was too up at arms right now to let his guard down for even a moment. He wanted to know what was going on, and then he’d probably high-tail it out of here to fix it. She shook her head. As much as she’d love to tell Justin since this was kind of super important for him, it wasn’t her place to do so; she strongly stood by that. She rubbed at the back of her head a bit as she contemplated the matter. Funny, here she was thinking that she was going to be giving Chie advice, and now she was some kind of mediator between her and Justin. That wasn’t exactly her forte though, and now she was left in the awkward position of not knowing what to do.

“It’s something she has to tell you herself.” Yukiko eventually sighed. There was no other way she could really put it without outright telling him, which of course wasn’t really her duty or privilege. He sighed with annoyance before hanging his head with shame. Somehow he doubted that was going to happen. She practically stormed out of the room at the mere sight of him; how could he expect her to tell him what was wrong?

“How bad is it? Can you at least tell me that?” Justin questioned. He’d like to at least know what he was getting into if she wasn’t going to tell him what he had

done wrong. She paused for a moment. It was actually a lot harder question to answer than you would think, simply because it was all a matter of persepective. In some regards it could be considered a very good thing, but right now, the shock of it all was simply terrifying. And we can all agree that was decidedly not good.

“I… think that depends on how you look at it.”

“Well how’s she looking at it?”

“Not well.”